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Marginal Column

By RENE LAQUEUR

FOR a long time now the Russian literary magazines have been the most detailed and also probably the most reliable source for many aspects of Soviet life and conditions. If "Novi Mir," "Otkrytiye," "Zvezda" and "Znamya" have not suddenly become unreliable hand-outs, and there is no reason to think so, then it must be taken that there have been considerable changes in recent weeks, at least in the Soviet literary scene. There was the editorial article by Ilya Ehrenburg in the October issue of one of the literary magazines which was tantamount to a call for a return to the status quo ante 1933 as far as restrictions and controls are concerned, to which Soviet writers have been subject since then, and indeed this means a lot. But Ehrenburg always enjoyed some special status, and it would have been wise to take him as the touchstone. However, since then, a considerable number of literary critics have said substantially the same words several times, in short stories and full-length novels have been published which simply could not have passed muster three, five, or even ten years ago.

WHAT IS no longer exclusively preoccupied with the idealization of their "positive heroes" and of conditions. They dare to touch problems and issues which have been out of bounds ever before the reform of the late Andrei Bzhduv. Critics now ridicule the literary stereotype of the tractor driver who, on the one hand, is a hero and on the other, a girl who he is going to repair the inventory of his Machine Tractor Station (MTS) going to marry only for that reason. A Pommerantse in "Novi Mir"; he about the minor who exclaims, "I wish my days were already over so that I could return to my work down the pit!" Mrs. Vera Pavlova in her novel published in December ("The Seasons of the Year") graphically describes the many and sometimes harrowing results of lack of housing space in an industrial center like Leningrad. About a third of her main figures are certainly not "positive heroes" as demanded by the critics. And yet, her novel is by far the most interesting, the freshest and probably the most realistic and greatest work of art to come out of Russia for many a year. Giving the writers and artists more freedom of expression is the only way, in my opinion, to make it possible to plan for the future, to make it possible to plan for the future.

ANOTHER good example is A. Vaino's "District Weekday." Describing things about which one critic says: "some writers hitherto did not see them and the others were silent because they thought that they were a matter to be dealt with by the highest authorities." It is an excellent example of the dictatorial manner and working methods of some Party secretaries in the local level. Such criticism has, it is true, occasionally been voiced before. But the important difference is that hitherto such criticism has been a capitalist-bourgeois way of life or thinking or morals while it is now realized that the real reason may be more complicated, and that such things may not be a "remnant" at all, but on the contrary, the healthy undergrowth of a new way of life. This, at least, is the conclusion drawn by a critic in the December issue of "Znamya," and he must know.

RUSSIAN revolutionaries make the Soviet writers and most of their characters appear to be human and let it be said, more sympathetic, honest, after all, is frequently a good policy. It may not be a profound new insight, but it is a step towards the truth. "People have to be virtuous" (to quote Mr. Ehrenburg again), but the redeeming word had to be added: "and who knows, perhaps the same goes for political systems too." It would be wrong to draw far-reaching political conclusions from the changes in the literary scene at the present time. Nor does one know whether these relaxations have come to stay, and whether the development in the desirable direction is likely to continue. One can only note a surprising trend which, one feels inclined to hope, is to take even more tangible form.

JERUSALEM, January 12.

U.S. SIXTH FLEET IN SPANISH PORT
SAN PEDRO, Saturday (Reuters).—Sixty-five ships of the U.S. Sixth Fleet entered Spanish port today for a six-day visit. Fleet Commander Vice-Admiral J. H. Cummings is aboard the USS Missouri, one of the eight vessels calling at Barcelona.

Iraq Denies Pact With Pakistan and Turkey

CAIRO, Saturday. — Iraqi Prime Minister Fadi Jassid today categorically denied that a pact between his country, Turkey and Pakistan is being envisaged. Speaking to reporters after the opening of the Arab League Council, he added that he would submit an amendment to the League's Charter stating that "realistic Arab unity is all fields."

Opposition Seen In Congress to Arab Aid

WASHINGTON, Saturday (UPI). — Information sources on Thursday predicted some opposition in Congress to the proposed aid for any arms shipment to the Arab League, the Palestine question and the fate of the Arab refugees.

The plans, which are said to be part of a defence alliance project including those two Arab countries and Pakistan, and Iran at some later date, came up before a committee of Congress today, the second day of the new session.

Secretary of State John Foster Dulles told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the principal stumbling block to the project is the factor of Pakistan-Indian relationship — in other words, India's opposition to the scheme.

What else he may have said on the subject was not disclosed to reporters, but informed sources commented that distrust in some sections of Congress for any arms shipment to the Arabs, as long as a state of war exists between them and Israel, will prove to be another difficulty for the Administration. According to reports, no final decision will be made on Pakistan pending the outcome of conversations with Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

Iraq Ministers Quit Over Martial Law in Basra

RAGHDAH, Saturday (Reuters). — Two Iraqi Ministers have resigned in protest against the imposition of martial law in Basra.

Dr. Abdul Rahman Jassid, Minister of Economics, and Dr. Hassan Jassid, Minister for Social Affairs, are understood to be ready to withdraw their resignations if martial law is abolished. Dr. Jassid's resignation was accepted today by Prime Minister Dr. Fadi Jassid. It is expected that Rahman's resignation will also be accepted.

Israel Said Asked To Release Arab Funds

BRITAIN has written a strongly worded note to Israel calling for the immediate release of more than £100 million frozen Arab funds. ANA reports from Beirut.

The note points out that two British banking firms, Barclays Bank and the Ottoman Bank, are being used mainly in Jordan because the money was originally deposited with them.

TWO KILLED BY BLINDED DRIVER

TEL AVIV, Saturday. — Two men were killed when they were knocked down by a car on the Tel Aviv-Haifa road. The driver, blind of the lights of oncoming cars, reversed and hit two of them. The road, they were told, they were told, they were told.

More Liberal U.S. Trade with East

WASHINGTON, Saturday (UPI). — Foreign Affairs Secretary Dean Rusk said today that increased East-West trade this year would mean the end of the Cold War.

He added in an interview that the Administration is now inclined to favor more trade with Western Europe's recovery has reached the point where it can be commensurate to the needs of the world.

He also said that the U.S. policy towards trading with the Soviet Union has been to encourage the development of trade through the free market and might even improve political relations with Russia.

But he stressed that the State Department has not changed its attitude opposing trade with the Soviet Union.

Vietminh Open Pincer Attack On French Base

HANOI, Saturday (UPI). — The Vietminh have launched a pincer attack on the French stronghold at Son, guarding the central Laos gateway to southern Laos — China. Air-supported French forces are locked with Vietminh forces in "violent combat," the French Command announced tonight.

The battle has been going on since last night, for the past 48 hours, a Command spokesman said.

Disclosures of the Viet fighting came after the French had held off the Vietminh for 30 miles to the North against Ho Chi Minh's forces, armed with artillery and tanks.

The centre of the central Laos battle was at Dongphong, 25 miles northwest of Son. The Vietminh had several battalions in their first major move since capturing Laos in half at Thanhkai in their Christmas offensive.

While one spearhead pushed South against Son, a second force attacked Thanhkai, in an attempt to cut Route Nine between Son and Yang Tri in the Annamese coast.

Initial Berlin Talks To Resume Monday

BERLIN, Saturday (Reuters). — The German representatives today decided to resume their preparatory talks on the Berlin question here to resume their discussions on Monday at the U.S. headquarters in West Berlin, an Allied spokesman stated.

A spokesman announcing this said that the three Western powers and the Soviet Union had agreed to resume talks on the Berlin question on Monday.

The four men had tea today after the meeting was over. The spokesman noted that the meeting was a success, the atmosphere was friendly, and the technical arrangements for the conference.

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U.S. Not Withdrawing Troops in Germany

WASHINGTON, Saturday (UPI). — Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson said today that the U.S. does not intend to withdraw more divisions from overseas in the near future.

He stated specifically that one of the U.S. Army's divisions in Germany will be pulled out in the foreseeable future.

First US-Soviet Atom Talks Set for Monday

WASHINGTON, Saturday (Reuters). — The first U.S.-Soviet atomic talks will start Monday in Moscow, Soviet Ambassador to the U.S. George F. Kennan said today.

He said that the talks will be held in the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, and that the U.S. will be represented by a high-ranking official.

Commonwealth to Fight Own Financial Battles

SYDNEY, Saturday (Reuters). — Commonwealth Finance Ministers have agreed at their conference in London that the Commonwealth will fight its own economic battles in the future.

The Ministers said that the Commonwealth will not be bound by the U.S. economic policy, and that they will be free to make their own decisions.

Japanese to See US For A-Bomb Attacks

TOKYO, Saturday (Reuters). — A Japanese spokesman said today that they will see the U.S. Government and former President Harry S. Truman to discuss the A-bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The spokesman said that the Japanese will be seeking a settlement with the U.S. and that they will be willing to discuss the A-bomb attacks.

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Nehru May Try To Mediate In Korea POW Issue

NEW DELHI, Saturday. — Prime Minister Nehru may approach the U.S. and China for a final attempt to settle the threatened crisis over the release of anti-separatist war prisoners, it was made known today.

A Government spokesman said that Mr. Nehru already had made the approach. He has not yet made up his mind, the spokesman said.

Western sources said that the Government probably will announce its decision on the fate of the prisoners next week.

Unless the U.N. and Communist Commands reach agreement, the spokesman said, India will probably favour freeing the prisoners.

In Peking, Chinese Prime Minister Chou En-lai today called for an immediate resumption of preliminary talks at Panmunjom on the proposed Korea political conference. But he did not say whether he would accept the U.S. offer.

The Chinese Premier said in his statement, broadcast over Peking Radio, that "the cessation of discussion will not solve any problem." He also called for a resumption of "come home" explanations to prisoners of war who have refused repatriation, which ended on December 23 last.

Jordan Hits UNRWA For Opposing Yarmuk Project

THE U.N. Relief and Works Agency is seeking to kill the Yarmuk River project in opposition to the Jordan Government's plan to build a dam on the river, the Jordanian press today charged in a White Paper.

The White Paper holds that the Jordanian Government is not bound by the UNRWA's plan to build a dam on the river, and that the Jordanian Government is free to make its own decisions.

The White Paper also states that the UNRWA's plan to build a dam on the river is a threat to the Jordanian Government's sovereignty, and that the Jordanian Government is free to make its own decisions.

Chiang Calls Assembly To Elect President

FORMOSA, Saturday (Reuters). — President Chiang Kai-shek today summoned the Chinese National Assembly to meet on February 19 to elect a President.

This is in accordance with the Constitution, which states that the Assembly shall be summoned to meet before each Presidential term expires.

President Chiang is expected to be re-elected.

USSR REORGANIZES LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

LONDON, Saturday (Reuters). — Moscow Radio announced today that an administrative reorganization in the local governments of Russia proper, the Ukraine and Byelorussia, will be carried out in the foreseeable future.

The USSR (Russian People's Republic) which has been divided into 46 administrative districts (provinces) for local administration purposes, will have five new districts carved out.

The number of districts is reduced from 12 to seven. There was no immediate indication of the purpose of the reorganization.

Hungarian Communists Shield Private Farmers

VIENNA, Saturday (Reuters). — The Hungarian Communist Party paper "Szabad Nep" says that a law allowing peasants to leave their land is a step towards the realization of the Communist program.

The article, quoted by Budapest Radio, threatens punishment for those responsible. It declared that peasants who withdrew from the cooperative farms in accordance with the right given them in July by Premier Imre Nagy had been grossly ill-treated.

They had not been given back their land, or had been given the worst possible land without tools, equipment or livestock, while others lay rotting on the collective farms.

Where peasants had been given their land, it was returned only in the second half of December as the land had not been ploughed and sown.

The article cited dozens of examples of the poor being treated, and charged the Communist Party organization with shielding the peasants.

Written obviously with high Communist authority, the article threatened those responsible with the peasants.

Mapai-G.Z. Reach Accord; New Gov't Seen In 9 Days

TEL AVIV, Saturday. — An agreement on a Coalition Government was reached between Mapai and General Zionist negotiators who met here tonight at the invitation of the Prime Minister designate, Mr. Moshe Sharett. Negotiations will be continued with the other three parties represented in the present coalition — Agudat Israel, the Religious Zionists and the Progressive Party — in efforts to keep them in the Cabinet, which Mr. Sharett said, might be presented to the Knesset on January 18. To B'Shvat (New Year for Trees) the fifth anniversary of the convening of the First Knesset, "it all goes well."

UN Tells Jordan To Reconsider Attitude

TEL AVIV, Saturday. — At a meeting here yesterday between Development Minister Dov Joseph, Communications Minister J. Saphir and Mr. Avraham Rubinstein, Director of the Palestine Electric Corporation, Mr. Rubinstein reported on the P.E.C. Board's reply to the Government's proposals regarding control of the Corporation.

The P.E.C. is understood to have rejected a proposal for partnership with the Government, and the Cabinet will now have to decide whether to pursue its second proposal to buy shares in the P.E.C. from any shareholder wishing to sell them at a price of 20 shillings each.

Addressing a Mapai-sponsored meeting in Natanya last night, Dr. Joseph pointed out that this purchase offer was not nationalization, as only those persons wishing to sell would do so.

The Minister said that the development of the P.E.C. during the next four years or so, to keep pace with the country's development, would entail an expenditure of some \$50m. and \$1.25m. P.E.C. representatives had been unable to mobilize capital in the U.S., he added.

PEC Said Rejecting Gov't Partnership

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Rabbi Kahane, M.K., To Retain Seat

Rabbi Kalman Kahane is to continue to represent Agudat Yisrael in the Knesset until the present House is dissolved, it was decided by a subcommittee of the Party Executive which met in Tel Aviv on Friday, according to a communiqué.

The subcommittee, which met to discuss the claims of Mr. Avraham Goldrat to the Knesset seat now held by Mr. Kahane, decided to reimburse the former for the legal expenses he had incurred in presenting his demand.

It was also decided that Mr. Goldrat's additional demands in regard to his position in the Party's institutions should be clarified at the earliest opportunity by the Party's Secretariat.

Fanfani Favoured As New Italian Premier

ROME, Saturday (Reuters). — Italians have begun a week of suspense and guessing about the name of their next Premier. President Luigi Einaudi today concluded three days of consultations with the country's political leaders to select the Prime Minister.

Fanfani, 45-year-old leader of a Christian Democrat left-wing group whose opposition was the immediate cause of Agnelli's resignation, appeared as likely candidate for the premiership. The executive and parliamentary groups of the Christian Democrats, Fascist Ministers stood to have recommended Agnelli as their first choice.

FRENCH COMMUNIST LEADER ARRESTED

CLERMONT FERRAND, Saturday (Reuters). — Police today arrested M. Andre Boulioueres, a member of the Central Committee of the French Communist Party and former Communist Senator.

He will be taken to Paris for questioning. A warrant recently had been issued for his arrest by the Paris Military Tribunal allegedly for conspiring to overthrow the monarchy of the French armed forces.

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